Presentation checklist

Use this checklist to help create compelling presentations that will be remembered! Compelling presentations are so rare that SlideRocket found that 32% of people fall asleep during PowerPoint presentations, and 20% would rather go to the dentist than sit through another one. Do not let this happen to you!

Your audience will pay closer attention and will find the presentation most compelling when it is:

Significant
Are you interpreting the information for the audience so they find meaning? What is the subject and why does it matter to you and your audience?

Structured
Present your key points in a way that makes sense for your audience. Your presentation will be more memorable and convincing.

Simple
Keep your presentation simple or risk your audience tuning out.

Practiced and Prepared
Rehearse your presentation. The smoother it goes, the easier it will be for your audience to listen and follow.

Use this checklist as you develop your presentation.

Significance

- **What is your purpose?** Clearly define the primary reason for the presentation. There should only be *one key message* that defines the purpose and why it is important to the audience.

- **Who is your audience?** Do your homework and learn any information you can about your audience ahead of time. Tailor your content to the audience.

Structure

- **What is your key message?** What is the *ONE thing* you want your audience to know?

- **Show. Don't just tell.** Don't just tell the audience what you want them to know; show them with 3–4 images and examples that support your point. The audience will not be able to remember more than 3–4 at one time.

- **Start with paper.** Start by outlining your presentation.

- **Edit, edit, edit.** Be brutal and CUT unnecessary content. You do not need to demonstrate all your knowledge and background. Include only 1-3 key points or takeaways and an example to illustrate each point.

Simplicity

- **Keep it simple.** Tell your audience what you will tell them, tell them, tell them conclusions, then tell them again by providing a summary and next steps. Your presentation should help the audience answer:

  - Why should I care?

  - How is this relevant to me/my life?

  - What should I do now based on the information I heard?

- **What is the request of the audience?** What do you want the audience to do with the information? How should they take action? Be able to answer the question: so what?

- **Cut out text.** Researchers have demonstrated time and time again that text is the least effective way to deliver important information. Yet despite clear evidence that wordy, bullet-point-heavy slides don't work, the average PowerPoint slide has 40 words.

Practice and Preparation

- **Practice transitions between topics.** Especially for multi-person presentations, identify and practice transitions. If each person creates his/her own presentation, talk about content beforehand so content is not repetitive.

- **Record your voice.** Be aware of and listen to your voice and intonation. Using a monotone voice or an upward intonation at the end of sentences (making it sound like a question) can put the audience to sleep, be distracting or reduce your credibility. Practice out loud and concentrate on keeping your tone consistent and placing emphasis appropriately.

- **Practice out loud.** Practicing out loud helps to smooth sentences and commit content to memory. It will help you time the presentation and identify areas that have too few or too many examples.

- **Equipment check.** Double check you have everything you need—wi-fi, computer, microphone, podium, screen, projector, etc.

- **Check out the room in advance.** Make sure the space and room set up is adequate for your presentation, particularly if there are breakout tables.

- **Have a plan B.** Have your presentation on a memory stick, email it to yourself and print a copy of the final presentation.

Presentation[1] design tips:

PowerPoint can help to visualize ideas and deliver key points. Do not use it as a place to store your presentation notes or to data dump. You should be prepared to speak without PowerPoint slides. With that in mind, take these tips into consideration:

- **Slides are free—break up content.** 1 key point per slide.

- **Keep bullets to 1–2 line only.**

- **Use data to illustrate your point.**

  - **Make sure the point is** clear in the data. Use circles and arrows to direct the audience to the data point.

  - Keep charts and graphs simple. Highlight ONE point per chart.

- **Do not read the slide.** People read faster than you speak. So if you read bullets and text, it makes your role irrelevant.

- **Make sure content is large and clear.** Can your audience see the content on the slide? Can someone easily follow the key points?

- **Use photographs/visuals on slides.** Use photos, not clip art. Clip art can make the presentation look slapdash. Other visuals, such as charts or graphics can help you get your point across without using a picture. Ensure visuals are relevant to the issue at hand.

- **Use a limited number of fonts and colors.** More than a couple can be distracting.

[1]While PowerPoint is the most popular presentation platform, alternatives include Keynote, Prezi, PowTown, or SlideRocket. All these tips still apply.

Presentation Checklist

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Resources:

- http://blog.prezi.com/latest/2014/2/7/10-most-common-rookie-mistakes-in-public-speaking.html/
- http://www.slideshare.net/thecroaker/death-by-powerpoint
- http://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/ted-speakers-on-presenting-public-speaking.html
- http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/34274/7-Lessons-From-the-World-s-Most-Captivating-Presenters-SlideShare.aspx
- http://www.slideshare.net/HubSpot/what-would-steve-do-10-lessons-from-the-worlds-most-captivating-presenters
- http://cubicleninjas.com/top-20-best-powerpoint-presentation-design/
- http://www.sliderocket.com/blog/2012/12/death-by-powerpoint-no-sex-instead-of-powerpoint/

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